

Message Text

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APPROVED BY:S/S: MR. ORTIZ

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 097863

NODIS

FOL REPEAT OF BEIRUT 3617 TO SECSTATE APRIL 22

QTE:

S E C R E T BEIRUT 3617

NODIS

FOR ATHERTON FROM BROWN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, PINT, LE, US, SY

SUBJECT: SYRIAN SUSPICIONS OF U.S. IN LEBANON

1. I NOTE FROM REPORTING OF DAMASCUS AND OTHER POSTS, PARTICULARLY AMMAN'S 2129 ON CODEL MATHIAS' CONVERSATIONS, THAT PRESIDENT ASSAD HARBORS INCREASING SUSPICIONS OF U.S. ROLE IN LEBANON. IN PARTICULAR, HE IS "AMAZED" AT OUR CONTACTS WITH JUMBLATT. I LIKE SENATOR MATHIAS' OBSERVATION THAT, WHILE ASSAD SEES U.S.- ISRAELI PLOT TO KEEP SYRIA FROM SUCCEEDING IN LEBANON, ARAFAT SEES U.S.- SYRIAN PLOT TO ENSURE SYRIA'S SUCCESS IN CONTROLLING PALESTINIANS. AS MATHIAS NOTED, NEITHER "CONSPIRACY" HAS ANY KERNEL OF TRUTH.

2. OUR CONTACTS WITH JUMBLATT GO BACK MANY MONTHS AND UNTIL
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RECENTLY HAVE BEEN MAINLY INDIRECT THROUGH MEMBERS OF JUMBLATT'S

ENTOURAGE WHO HAD RELATIONS WITH EMBASSY AS BUSINESSMEN DEAL-
ING WITH U.S. THESE CONTACTS LATER MATURED INTO DIRECT POLITICAL
DISCUSSIONS WITH JUMBLATT, PARTICULARLY AFTER MY ARRIVAL. AS I
AM CONFIDENT ASSAD WOULD UNDERSTAND, JUMBLATT IS IMPORTANT
ACTOR ON LEBANESE SCENE, AND THEREFORE I HAD TO TOUCH BASES
WITH HIM IN MY MISSION. MY AIM WAS, FIRST, TO REASSURE
HIM OF U.S. GOALS IN LEBANON AND, SECONDLY, TO URGE CONTINU-
ING MODERATION ON HIS PART. THE DISPARATE PARTIES HE HEADS
HAVE BEEN FREQUENT SOURCE OF MISUNDERSTANDINGS--INDEED,
SOMETIMES DOWNRIGHT LIES-- ABOUT U.S. POLICY IN LEBANON; SAS
LEADER OF THESE PARTIES AND MAN OF LONG EXPERIENCE IN LEBANESE
POLITICS, JUMBLATT SEEMED BEST AND ONLY CONTACT TO DAMPEN THESE
DISTORTED OPINIONS. IN URGING MODERATION, I WAS SEEKING TO
ENCOURAGE THE REASONABLE SIDE AND DETER THE RADICAL SIDE OF THIS
MAN'S COMPLEX POLITICAL CHARACTER.

3. IN ALL OF THESE CONTACTS WITH JUMBLATT, OUR AIM PARALLELS
THAT OF SYRIA RATHER THAN THE REVERSE. JUST AS ASSAD WANTS
PEACE TO COME TO LEBANON THROUGH SYRIAN MEDIATION, SO DO WE.
ROLE OF JUMBLATT IN THIS IS IMPORTANT, AND WE ARE TRYING TO KEEP
HIM ON BOARD THE SETTLEMENT PROCESS. WE THINK WE HAVE BEEN
PARTLY SUCCESSFUL, THOUGH AS ASSAD KNOWS AS WELL AS ANYONE,
JUMBLATT IS OFTEN HARD TO FATHOM. IN ANY EVENT ASSAD WOULD BE
APPARENTLY SURPRISED TO LEARN TO WHAT EXTENT WE HAVE BEEN
SUPPORTING SYRIAN POLITICAL MEDIATIONS VIS-A-VIS JUMBLATT,
DESPITE LATTER'S GROWING SUSPICIONS ABOUT THIS EXERCISE.

4. SUGGEST THIS MESSAGE BE REPEATED TO DAMASCUS. PERHAPS
AN OCCASION WOULD ARISE WHEN DICK MURPHY WOULD FIND IT USEFUL
TO PASS ON ITS CONTENTS.
BROWN UNQTE KISSINGER

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